

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS – SPECIAL ARTICLES

JUNE 8, 2021

ARTICLE 3. WATER DEPARTMENT

Many positive steps have been taken by the Water Department Clerk and the commissioners over the last few years. Rates have been raised and \$235,000 is expected to be taken in via the ratepayers in FY22. Town subsidy requested is \$5,263.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor, 0 against.

ARTICLE 4. REVOLVING FUNDS

These are accounts into which money flows from various users of services and is paid out to the town or various suppliers, such as our inspectors.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against.

ARTICLE 5. LOCAL OPTION ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX

Town will receive a local excise tax at the rate of 6% as described in Article 5.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against.

ARTICLES 6 AND 7. IMPACT FEES

The Town will receive a local option community impact fee of 3% on professionally managed units as defined in Article 6 and the town will receive a local option community impact fee of 3% as it applies to short-term rental units as described in Article 7.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against.

ARTICLE 8. OSHA COMPLIANCE

The \$10,000 request supplies the Fire Department with funds to comply with OSHA compliance regulations. The Finance Committee has been advised that the town is up to date with recent OSHA requirements and there may be no request for funds next year.

The Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against.

ARTICLE 9. TREE REMOVAL ON TOWN PROPERTY

\$9,000 is requested by our Buildings and Grounds Superintendent to remove dead or diseased trees on town owned property (such as French Park, the Library and Village Green).

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 10. CEMETERY REPAIRS

This article asks the transfer of \$3,000 from the cemetery perpetual care account to pay for repairs at our town cemeteries.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 11. REPAIRS AT FRENCH PARK

This article seeks \$11,300 to make repairs at French Park. Such repairs include taring the driveway apron into the park, a new culvert and swale and a little league ballfield fence.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 12. FRENCH PARK WIFI INSTALLATION

This article seeks \$10,000 to install wi-fi in French Park. The Finance Committee supports the concept of providing wi-fi to visitors to the Park. We question, however, the Town's investment of \$10,000 to do so without first determining whether the Fiber Connect service should be obligated to make the investment instead, as part of its payment for use of the Park. There will be no long-term lease of the land to Fiber Connect. The Finance Committee has been advised by the Select Board that there have been many instances of Fiber Connect having provided compensatory benefits to the town over the years, and therefore no lease arrangement has been signed.

Finance Committee reluctantly recommends approval, 4 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 13. TRACTOR/MOWER FOR BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

This article seeks \$20,000 to purchase a tractor/mower with a bucket in front with a platform. Our current mower does not have a bucket, which will expedite clearing brush, especially in French Park. Our John Deere mower is a 15- year old tractor mower expected to be auctioned off or traded in at an estimated value of \$2,000. Interestingly, the price of the new tractor mower was less with no trade in!

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 14. TRUCK FOR THE BUILDINGS & GROUNDS DEPARTMENT

This article asks \$48,000 to purchase a new Ford 250 truck with a flat back to enable our Buildings & Grounds employees to be more efficient and accomplish more as they work around town, especially in French Park. It will also come with a plow package. The current model has rust on fenders and undercarriage. The current dump truck will be auctioned off or kept as a spare. This is a State bid item meaning the state has negotiated the best price for this equipment.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor, 0 against

ARTICLE 15. PICK UP TRUCK FOR HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

This article asks \$40,000 to purchase a new Ford F250 pick up to replace the aging 2012 pickup. Trade in value is estimated to be \$7,000. The difference in price between the Highway Department vehicle and the Buildings & Grounds Department vehicle is the plow package. The state has negotiated the best price for this piece of equipment.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 16. REPAIRS TO TOWN ROADS

This article requests \$150,000 to make repairs to and to resurface to town roads. This amount has been requested the last three years as part of a capital improvement plan for the roads of the town. In using \$150,000 each year, the Highway Department completes resurfacing 3-5 miles of town road per year (depending on the cost of materials). With these funds roads will be resurfaced/repared every 7-8 years as opposed to 12 years. Last year Creamery Road was resurfaced and in FY22 McGee Road is on the list to be resurfaced.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 17. LIBRARY/MT. EVERETT ACADEMY – CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION

This article asks \$30,000 to pay for Construction Administration services in connection with the renovation of the Mt. Everett Academy/Library. The town applied for a grant from the Mass Preservation Projects Fund to assist with the repairs and renovation of the Mt. Everett Academy, a historical building that now houses the Library and Historical Commission. The town, according to grant conditions, must pay for the administration of the Construction services. This article is tied into the next two articles.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 18. RENOVATION OF LIBRARY/MT. EVERETT ACADEMY

The Town has applied for a \$252,300 grant (the total amount of prospective structural repairs per the grant application to the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund for the Library/Mt. Everett building. The grant application provides details of the renovation with a project description and technical planning and estimated cost. Years ago, the town received \$118,000 as part of another grant award (Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund) for the Library/Mt. Everett Academy. A transfer from the Library Preservation Project to the South Egremont School of \$98,500 occurred in 2018. Those funds are no longer available to be applied to Mt. Everett Academy. The Academy was built as a school in 1832 and in 1882 the building was sold to the Town for use as a town hall. This is arguably the most important historic property in town. The town is seeking a \$100,000 grant to cover part of the costs, the amount of which is estimated to be \$252,300, however we will not know if we will get that amount or some other reduced amount. The \$252,300 will allow us to proceed with renovation even if we receive nothing since it is the estimated cost of the first phase of the project. ADA accessibility and the cost will need to be addressed.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 19. HISTORIC PRESERVATION EASEMENT

As a condition to receiving grant funds for the Mt. Everett Academy the town must grant a historic preservation easement forever. Such an easement will require the building to be subject to all sorts of requirements when being repaired in future. This will make maintenance and repairs more costly over the years.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 20. ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDS FROM STATE

The town must vote to accept \$165,519.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 21. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This article asks for \$10,000 to fund a land evaluation of the affordable housing site behind the town hall. Since the Construct plan is dead, this will allow the town to more accurately assess what can be built on the site.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 22. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This article seeks \$6,800 to pay the tuition of a vocational education student. We are required by Title XII, Chapter 74, Section 7C to pay the tuition and will do so for all four years of high school, assuming he or she completes the program.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 23. REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANNING BOARD

This article requests \$8,000 for the purpose of supporting the work of the Regional School District Planning Board in its study of the financial and educational advisability of options for consolidating the SBRSD and the Berkshire Hills Regional School District. The group has also received a substantial grant to enable them to move forward with consultants. Towns belonging to both districts have been requested to make an \$8,000 contribution.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 24. RESCIND BORROWING AUTHORIZATION

No longer needed.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 25. POLICE CRUISER

This article asks \$60,000 for a new police cruiser. Our 2013 Ford Explorer has 130,000 miles on it. The fuel pump needs repair, there is no heat, and the transmission is slipping. Costs to repair exceed \$5,000. It will not pass inspection. The replacement cruiser from Ford has a new body style and will need to be outfitted with new gear. The cost of the cruiser is approximately \$54,000 but with the required addons it will be near \$60,000.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 4 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 26. FIRE TRUCK.

This article seeks approval to borrow \$315,000 for a fire apparatus. The fire department is retiring Engine 2, a 1995 model in poor condition. In keeping with the changing needs of firefighters as the type of responses for first responding firefighters change, the department are aware that apparatus need to evolve to meet the situations presented to it. This vehicle is smaller, nimble, and fitted with modern firefighting technology, such as foam, and will allow for rapid response and more flexibility on a call. It is still a powerful vehicle with new technology, thus the cost factor is still significant. The Finance Committee recommends this purchase since insurance rates paid by homeowners are impacted by the general quality of the town's firefighting equipment and the subsequent rating applied to the town by the underwriters.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 27. HIGHWAY DUMP TRUCK

This article seeks approval to borrow \$270,000 to purchase a new dump truck for the Highway Department. The truck to be replaced is a 2005 International which is no longer reliable or safe with many breakdowns occurring the last two years. Because of its age, it is getting much harder to replace broken parts. According to our Highway Superintendent, who has researched what the truck may bring, will sell for \$0-\$10,000, most likely nearer to 0. To repair or replace a 16-year-old dump body and plow would cost \$80,000 to \$90,000. The Finance Committee believes it is financially irresponsible to spend that kind of money on a 16-year-old truck with problems such as ours.

The new dump truck is a 2021 model, Severe Duty Freightliner. The state has negotiated the best price for this piece of equipment. The truck is used almost daily, year-round, for snow and ice removal, handling big drifts, hauling material and road repairs. It is the town's work horse. The new truck would be more efficient, meaning our crew would cover more roads and not deal with the downtime that comes each time the 2005 is taken in for repair.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against.

ARTICLE 28. A BUILDING FOR BUILDINGS & GROUNDS DEPARTMENT

This article seeks approval to borrow \$275,000 to construct a new building to house the Building & Grounds Department. Last year funds were approved to study the site (up by the Highway garage) and engineer the design of the building. The "shack" on Town House Hill Road which has served for years as a space for Buildings & Grounds to work is tiny, has no heat and has outlived by many years its useful life.

The schematic design and estimate of costs were done by Green River Architecture and a report was issued in January 2021. The project will be put out to bid if the town approves the borrowing.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 29. MT. WASHINGTON ROAD

This article seeks approval to borrow \$335,000 to pay for the continuing engineering work on Mt. Washington Road required under the Transportation Infrastructure Program. See the Finance Committee's analysis under Debe and Interest.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 30. GASB STABILIZATION FUND

This article seeks \$15,000 be deposited into the GASB Stabilization Account. Although the town took a break from funding last year, the Finance Committee believes it is wise to keep pace with public relief accounting regulations and recognize currently the liability of future retirement benefits the town is responsible for.

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLE 31. RESCIND A PRIOR VOTE

Housekeeping

Finance Committee recommends approval, 5 in favor 0 against

ARTICLES 32 , 33, 34 and 35

Finance Committee makes no recommendation

ARTICLES 36 AND 37

Finance Committee makes no recommendation